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SUBJECT: PRT/LASHKAR GAH - NAW ZAD PROSECUTOR SAYS  
OFFICIAL CORRUPTION CAUSES ALIENATION

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Helmand's northern Naw Zad district suffers from both a lack of governance and security. District leadership appears to be engaged in drug trafficking. According to the district's prosecutor, after four years citizens are running out of patience and their loyalty to the government is diminishing. All schools are closed, pending improved security. Over the past two years, there has been a rise in homicides, most remaining unsolved. Poppy cultivation continues apace. End summary.

¶2. (U) On February 22, PRToff accompanied the PRT commander and civil affairs personnel on a visit to Naw Zad district, located in the northern section of the province. During the visit, PRT civil affairs personnel also performed a quality control assessment for two ongoing projects: (1) a new district jail; and (2) a new school.

Corrupt Leadership Mitigates Support for Government

¶3. (SBU) Prosecutor Abdul Baqi told poloff that the district chief and the chief of police (CoP) are both engaged in drug trafficking, including extorting local merchants to facilitate the trafficking. A number of shops in the local bazaar were being used to transport and market opium, he

added. (Note: Another source told PRToff that Baqi is "not an honest man." Although in Helmand, one official's accusing another of corruption and/or drug trafficking is not unusual, Baqi's allegations should also be considered in this context. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) According to Baqi, after the fall of the Taliban, people had great hopes that with the move towards democracy they would see governance improvements. After the elections for President, national legislature, and provincial council, however, they are still faced with a local government that is dishonest and inept. Baqi said that corruption in the district was so rampant that "it is more like looting." People are losing patience, he added, and this makes it easier for the Taliban to convince people to work against the government. As a result, security in Naw Zad has also deteriorated. Separately, district chief Haji Sadozi said that, due to the lack of security, all schools in Naw Zad are closed and will remain so until the security situation improves. Sadozi said that he could not predict when this might occur. (Note: Naw Zad district center was attacked by armed gunmen on February 3. End Note.)

#### Murder for Hire

¶5. (SBU) Baqi lamented the significant rise in homicides in Naw Zad over the past two or three years. This past year, there were 30 homicides, compared to about 20 the year before. Many of these murders were contract hits, he claimed, usually

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involving drugs or other criminal enterprises. Baqi complained that the police only arrested suspects in six cases, primarily because they were bribed to ignore potential suspects. (Note: In Lashkar Gah, this type of bribery also extends to the prosecutor's office. End Note). Baqi predicted that the murder rate would continue to rise as long as poppy cultivation and drug trafficking continue to flourish in Naw Zad.

#### Extensive Poppy Cultivation

¶6. (SBU) As we have heard in other districts, poppy cultivation in Naw Zad is also continuing apace. Baqi said that farmers are planting poppy "to the extent possible." He said that the Taliban are "encouraging" the cultivation as a way to promote anti-government activity among the population. Since the top district officials are part of the drug trade, they have no incentive to take action against farmers and/or traffickers, he added.

#### Comment

¶7. (SBU) Notwithstanding Baqi's shaky credibility, our discussion with him followed an all too familiar pattern. The appointment of Governor Daud is obviously an important step in the right direction. As exemplified by Naw Zad, however, governance in Helmand's districts remains distressingly inept and corrupt. Faced with a growing insurrection, whether reforms in Helmand proceed quickly enough to restore the faith of an increasingly skeptical population is an open question.

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